Chapter 6
Language Education and Canada's Indigenous Peoples

Mela Sarkar and Constance Lavoie

Abstract This chapter presents an overview of the language situation of Canada's Indigenous peoples and their educational struggles. The authors situate policies, programs and pedagogical strategies in the complex historical and socio-political Canadian context. After an outline of the historical and socio-political context for the language education of Indigenous peoples in Canada, contemporary Indigenous policies, programs and pedagogical strategies around language education are presented, in the aftermath of the Indigenous struggle for self-determination and increasing mainstream awareness of Indigenous language and education issues. A surge in Indigenous population growth resulting in an increasingly youthful population profile, a pull towards urbanization, and the rise of new technologies are all factors that are affecting the landscape of language and education in Indigenous (or Aboriginal) Canada. Drawing on data from a language maintenance project in a Quebec Innu community and a language revitalization project in a Mi'gmaq community in the Maritimes, the gamut of Indigenous responses to the challenge of not one but two colonizing languages is demonstrated. These initiatives are placed in the wider Canadian context.

Keywords Mi'gmaq • Innu • Indigenous language • First Nations • Indian education • Bilingualism • Revitalization • Canadian Aboriginal education • Endangered languages

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6.1 Background to Canada's Indigenous Peoples and Languages

Canada has traditionally been home to many different ethnolinguistic groups that predate the arrival of European explorers and settlers by many thousands of years. In the far North live the Inuit, who are speakers of several different dialects of Inuktitut (Allen 2006). Several dozen First Nations peoples live across Canada, speaking over 50 still-living languages among them, though many are technically considered moribund (not expected to survive) by linguists, because they are not being transmitted to younger generations (McIvor 2009; Task Force 2005). Finally, a people of mixed origin, the Métis, arose over three centuries ago from unions between First Nations peoples and French explorers and evolved a unique contact language, Michif, mainly from French and Cree with elements from other European languages (Kulchyski 2007; H. Souter, personal communication, January 2010). A dozen or so distinct language families are represented in Canada alone. Among the languages spoken by Canada's first peoples, only Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut are considered strong enough to be able to survive into the twenty-second century (Norris 2007) on the basis of survey and census data. However, many of the smaller languages are now the focus for vigorous language retention and revitalization efforts by those who claim them as their heritage.

In this chapter, we outline the complex historical and socio-political context underlying language education for this diverse and growing population. We then discuss relevant policies, programs and pedagogical strategies, in the context of the ongoing struggle for self-determination and increasing mainstream awareness of the issues involved. Drawing on our own data from a preschool project in a Quebec Innu community and an adult language revitalization project in a Maritimes Mi'gmaq community, we demonstrate the gamut of responses across the lifespan to the challenge of not one but two colonizing languages (English and French) and place these initiatives in the wider Canadian context. This wider context has come to include, in recent years, rapid urbanization, the advent of digital literacies and an increasingly youthful Indigenous population profile. These factors have all contributed to new challenges and opportunities for Indigenous languages in Canada and for their speakers.

6.1.1 Terms in Use, Terms of Use/Abuse

We preface our summary of the sociocultural and linguistic history of the earliest settlement of what is now Canada by outlining terms we will and will *not* use. It should be noted that thoughout the history of contact between the original inhabitants of Canada and more recent arrivals from Europe, systemic racism has left a linguistic legacy, unfortunately far from eradicated on the lips of many

Canadians (Lepage 2009; Paul 2006; Razack 2007), which must be recognized so that it can afterward be avoided.

6.1.1.1 Indigenous, Aboriginal or Native?

In line with internationally recognized usage (for example at the United Nations (Cyberschoolbus n.d.)), the term we prefer for the first human inhabitants of a given territory is *Indigenous*. This eliminates the confusion that can arise when Australian first peoples (traditionally called "Aboriginal" in white settler nomenclature) are part of the discussion. However, in Canadian official discourse the term *Aboriginal* is preferred. In Canadian government parlance, "Aboriginal" is used to cover First Nations, Inuit and Métis (INAC 2002). The term *Native peoples* was at one time very widely used in Canada "to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America" (INAC 2002). Although many consider *Native,* as either a noun or an adjective, somewhat dated, it is still not uncommon to hear Indigenous Canadians referred to as "Natives", and perhaps even more common to hear *non-*Indigenous Canadians referred to as "non-Native" in everyday speech. The term "Native" survives in academic and other written contexts as well, for example in the name of the well-respected *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, in existence since the mid-1970s.

6.1.1.2 First Nations ("Indian"), Inuit and Métis

The terms "Inuit" and "Métis" each refer to a historically distinct people with their own territory and language, which may include several varieties, as with Inuktitut (Allen 2006). The term "First Nations", however, refers not to one ethnolinguistic identity but to several dozen, and specifically excludes Inuit and Métis. Canada's "First Nations", were, nevertheless, all lumped together until quite recently under the term "Indian", a word which still has legal force although it is technically inaccurate. (It is easy to demonstrate accurate use of this adjective, as it happens: the first author of this chapter was born in India and was Indian until becoming a naturalized Canadian at the age of 8.) Various pieces of legislation reflect this familiar but now less preferred usage, as did the name of a department of the federal government in Ottawa until recently. Canada's Department of "Indian and Northern Affairs" changed its name only in May 2011, to "Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development" (AANDC 2011, http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/).

6.1.1.3 "...savages...primitive cultures..."

Terms such as "primitive" and "savage(s)", or, in French, *"primitif", "sauvage(s)"* were routinely applied to Canada's original inhabitants until very recently. The implication of this kind of discourse, namely that the people referred to were

inferior (and thus fair game for exploitation and oppression), is one that many non-Indigenous Canadians have tended to absorb at an early and impressionable age (Paul 2006). Government and academic rhetoric, as well as (one hopes) most textbooks and other instances of language use in the public sphere, have now been overhauled (Lepage 2009). But cleanup, even if only cosmetic, is more complicated in the case of speech communities, and many misconceptions about Indigenous Canadians persist in ordinary language (for example, *CBC News* 2008 outlines some damaging recent effects of the continued prevalence of the "drunken Indian" stereotype).

6.1.2 Before the Arrival of White Settler Europeans

Current research by non-Indigenous scholars (summarized for general audiences in many easily accessible works, e.g., Diamond 1997; Wright 2003) generally holds that the first human inhabitants of North America entered at the western tip of Alaska about 12,000 years ago (estimates differ slightly), crossing from Siberia. Under conditions of nomadic hunter-gather population spread as they are currently understood, it would not have taken long for humans to explore both new continents, and in fact the archaeological record indicates that there was settlement at the southernmost tip of South America within 2,000 years.

Geography determined the lines of human settlement 10,000 years ago, as it has continued to do to the present day. Indigenous languages in Canada roughly follow these lines, which generally run north-south rather than east-west, and are traversed by waterways used over many millennia for human travel (Carlos and Lewis 2010; Saul 2008). Remnants of the original language families and sub-families—which developed as the earliest settlers fanned out, down and across the continent—can still be discerned beneath an overlay of European white settler colonization, much of which sought actively to decimate or outright wipe out the original inhabitants and their languages (Paul 2006; Wright 2003). But we still have traces of a large grouping of languages along Canada's west coast, many of them now extinct or moribund (FPHLCC 2010); a broad western area where Athapaskan languages are spoken; another huge area spreading across the plains and into Ontario and Quebec, where the Algonquian languages Cree, Ojibwe and Oji-Cree are still in regular use in many communities (other languages in this area have not been as fortunate although many are still spoken by older people); other Algonquian languages spoken in Canada's Maritime provinces, the most widespread being Innu and Mi'gmaq; Iroquoian languages, chiefly Kanien'keha (Mohawk), spoken in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence river basin area; and a wide northern region roughly north of the 60th parallel where various dialects of Inuktitut are still the main and sometimes the only language spoken by an estimated 35,000 people (AANDC 2011; Allen 2006).

6.1.3 From Trading Partners to Colonial Subjects/Objects of Assimilatory Practices

6.1.3.1 First Contact, or, "If we had known they planned to stay this long. . ."

More than 100 years elapsed between the first incursions into what is now Canada by adventurers financed by French or English ruling houses, to the establishment of permanent colonies. The first settlers from France arrived in the Maritime provinces in the 1530s; their descendants, the French-speaking Acadians, are still thriving in the province of New Brunswick. Other colonists from France spread through what is now Quebec and continued further west. French settlement of the St. Lawrence basin and then of the Great Plains predated English settlement by more than a century. Concise, up-to-date mainstream histories are numerous (e.g., Morton 2006) and since there is not room to go into detail here, we do no more than sketch an outline from the Indigenous point of view, as a tale of conquest and resistance (Wright 2003) to which no one can as yet predict the ending. Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources agree, however (Kulchyski 2007; Paul 2006; Saul 2008) that European "exploration" and settlement would not have been possible without the cooperation, and, for several hundred years, the active assistance, of Indigenous peoples (since the European explorers were in no instance the first people to figure out the lay of the land, words like "explorer" and "discoverer" are misnomers).

One of our Indigenous teaching partners puts it this way: "Sure, we welcomed them, and showed them how to live here—but if we'd known they were planning to move in for good, maybe we wouldn't have been so nice!"

From the early sixteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, Indigenous-European relations over much of Canada were much more equal than they have since become. The main impetus for establishing good relations was spurred by trade; the European appetite for furs laid the foundation for over three centuries of commercial relations between Indigenous hunters and trappers on the one side, and European merchants, especially the Hudson's Bay Company, on the other, (Carlos and Lewis 2010; Saul 2008). However, the nineteenth century ushered in an era of modernization and industrialization. Aggressive colonial policies were put in place by European powers, designed to "open up" the North American continent. This, coupled with the decline of the fur trade, put an end to the former relationship between equals.

6.1.3.2 One Hundred and Fifty Bad Years: The Indian Act and the Residential School Era

The key piece of legislation regulating the lives of Canada's Indigenous peoples insofar as their relations with white settlers and the white settler government is the Indian Act, first enacted in 1876. It is still very much in force (in a modified form

dating back to 1951), despite generations of Indigenous activism. In 1867, the British Dominion of Canada acquired the status of a more or less independent nation; the federal government therefore was solely responsible for drafting and enacting the Indian Act. No Indigenous participation was sought at the time, nor were subsequent attempts by Indigenous leaders to influence policy accepted for nearly a century. By internal fiat, the federal government in Ottawa has arrogated to itself the responsibility of administering Canada's Indigenous peoples on their behalf ever since, including in matters of education. As one team of two Indigenous teacher-researchers and a non-Indigenous academic drily puts it, "Euro-Canadians have been making decisions about the education of Aboriginal peoples for some considerable time" (Orr et al. 2002, p. 331). Good short summaries of the Act and its provisions exist (e.g., Kulchyski 2007). The educational provisions led to a policy of overt assimilation designed to "kill the Indian in the child". The intent of this unsuccessful and ultimately disastrous policy was to eliminate Canada's "Indian problem" within a couple of generations.

Following the Indian Act, the 1880s therefore saw the first "residential schools", run by religious communities of various denominations, which were eventually established across Canada with the express purpose of removing Indian children from their homes and communities (using physical force and/or psychological coercion in many if not most instances), eradicating their cultures and languages, and assimilating them to white settler culture. By the 1930s there were 80 such schools. The last residential school was not formally closed until 1996 (Milloy 1999). As we have been told personally by survivors, and as the literature amply attests, Indigenous languages were systematically "beaten out of" the young inmates of residential schools (Blacksmith 2011 and Knockwood 2001 are first-person accounts). Punishing children for speaking their Indigenous languages by beating them or washing their mouths out with soap was official policy. Some other forms of abuse (including widespread child sexual abuse by priests) were not, but are widely attested in the academic and survivor literature (Fournier and Crey 1997; Milloy 1999).

In 2008 the Canadian government formally apologized to Canada's Indigenous peoples for the residential schools and acknowledged responsibility for the havoc they wreaked (Atleo and Fitznor 2010; McIvor 2009), without, however, offering much in the way of solutions; cash handouts by way of recompense were a gesture that did nothing to bring back vanished languages or to rebuild decimated, impoverished communities. It is now generally acknowledged that "[t]he effect on families and communities was devastating, and resulted in the serious social conditions endemic in Aboriginal communities in Canada, and a fear and mistrust of formal schooling and care settings" (Hare and Anderson 2010, p. 20).

As Canadian public intellectual John Ralston Saul has said, from about 1850 through to the end of the twentieth century were 150 bad years in the relationship between Indigenous and white Canadians (Saul 2008); as he and others have also said, it's time to move on. But that ugly century and a half in which the resources of a powerful government were used to enforce openly genocidal policies in education have left a legacy of lasting trauma that is very difficult for individuals and

communities to overcome (Atleo and Fitznor 2010). The miracle is that so many Indigenous peoples—and, even more impressively, their languages—have in fact survived into the twenty-first century. As we will see, the process of recovery is now under way. But forces of modernization and globalization may yet succeed, ironically, in "pulling" Indigenous youth away from their cultural roots, even though generations of brutal official "pushing" did not quite manage to destroy their parents' and grandparents' link to their ancestral identities.

6.2 Policies, Programs and Pedagogy: From the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century

6.2.1 Patchwork Semi-solutions to Perennial Problems

In addition to the system of residential schools, "Indian" children also attended local schools both on- and off-reserve (Metallic et al. 2012). In Canada, education is a provincial jurisdiction, except in the case of First Nations children living on reserve. Under the Indian Act, responsibility for children on reserve falls to the federal government. This situation has resulted in a patchwork of local responses to the challenge of educating Indigenous children which persists to this day, as federal and provincial authorities engage in continual, quite literal buck-passing about who should pay for what. While the educational climate itself is not as bad as in the days of the residential schools, it is still the case that Indigenous Canadians are seriously underschooled compared to the non-Indigenous population, and can, in fact, be compared to developing-country populations on many other measures, such as access to clean water, health care, decent housing, and employment opportunities (Salée et al. 2006). The question of providing language education, therefore, must be seen against a backdrop in which education in general is all too often underfunded and inadequate.

6.2.2 Indian Control of Indian Education

A number of developments in the Canadian political landscape in the 1960s led to a gradual reassertion of control for Indian education by the Indian bands themselves. *Indian Control of Indian Education* was the title of a landmark 1972 policy paper used successfully by the Indigenous leadership to put pressure on the federal government. After 1972, many First Nations communities were able to set up their own schools. It became apparent in the early 1970s as well that language shift toward the majority language was occurring in many Indigenous communities. A "three-generation" sequence is often described under colonialism. Grandparents, living traditional lifestyles, are monolingual in the ancestral language, parents

become bilingual as a result of the pressures of schooling or employment, and grandchildren are monolingual in the colonial language (Nettle and Romaine 2000). This pattern started to play itself out in community after community from the 1960s on, almost certainly aided by the advent of television and the resulting presence in every home of a source of non-stop English input (J. Vicaire, personal communication, September 2008).

Fluency in a colonial language was and is considered the main linguistic priority for Indigenous children by governments and band councils. Therefore, "Indian control of Indian education", although it led to the building of many more schools directly controlled by the communities themselves, did not in fact mean education in Indigenous languages except in the early grades and for a small minority of Indigenous children. The present situation as far as the languages of schooling across Canada's more than 600 First Nations and Inuit communities can be understood in terms of two factors:

- Is the Indigenous language still being passed down to children through intergenerational transmission?
- Does the community want its members to be fluent in the Indigenous language as well as the colonial language?

If the answer to both questions is Yes, then the Indigenous language is more likely to be used in the early grades and to be continued as a school subject. However, in communities where this is the case, at present the second half of primary school and all of secondary school take place in the colonial language. In such communities, young children are typically fluent speakers of their language upon school entry (perhaps even monolingual speakers, although with the presence of the media and the internet in even the most remote communities, this is becoming more and more rare). If the children are bilingual in the colonial language as well, this may be an Indigenized variety (Peltier 2010; Sterzuk 2011) rather than the mainstream variety required for school success.

If the answer to both questions is No, then usually language shift has advanced to the point where there is little or no role for the Indigenous language in schools. There may be "culture classes" in which the children are introduced to artistic activities such as beadwork or drumming, encouraged to learn traditional songs and stories (in the colonial language), told about ancient lifeways, and so forth.

If the answer to the first question is Yes, but fluent bilingualism is not a concern (the answer to the second question is No), this may be because of a lack of awareness of how rapidly community language shift can proceed (Allen 2006; Fishman 2001). Or language shift may not be much on people's minds. As it so often happens, communities may not realize how much their language means to them until they lose it. In this situation, again, there is little or no role for the Indigenous language in schools. Schooling may be entirely through the medium of the colonial language.

Finally, if the answer to the first question is No, but the answer to the second question is Yes—that is, the community is losing or has lost the language, but hopes to re-establish it as a community language, at least in certain domains—then the

way is open for language revitalization initiatives. Immersion education is one example: all schooling is through the Indigenous language, at least in the early grades (it is a second language for the children) followed by the continued presence of the language as a school subject, with eventual fluent bilingualism being an explicit goal. However, at present, even in communities with immersion schools the second half of primary school and all of secondary school take place in the colonial language. Other language revitalization measures, such as adult classes of various kinds (Richards and Maracle 2002; Sarkar and Metallic 2009) may be put in place.

6.2.3 Dreaming and Doing

At present, as far as we have been able to determine, the majority of Indigenous children, whether they attend Indigenous-run or provincially-run schools, are schooled solely through the medium of a colonial language (with the Indigenous language possibly being offered as a school subject). This is by far the most common model. A second model, available for a minority of Indigenous children, is found in those schools where the first few grades of primary education are through the medium of an ancestral language. This may be in a mother-tongue context—for example, the Quebec Innu, discussed below, and most Inuit children across the North. Alternatively, it may be in an immersion school. Some examples of communities with well-established immersion schools are:

- § the Mi'kmaq of Eskasoni (http://www.eskasonischool.ca/) ("Mi'kmaq" and "Mi'gmaq" are alternate spellings, used in Quebec and Nova Scotia/New Brunswick respectively);
- § the Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) of Kahnawake, Quebec (http://kec.qc.com/);
- § the Cree of Onion Lake, Saskatchewan (http://creebeyondwords.com/);
- § the Secwepemc of Adams Lake, BC (http://school.chiefatahm.com/).

In cases of which we have some personal knowledge, it seems that the immersion model has been successful as a strategy for Indigenous language revitalization. Young people are starting to speak the language to each other again, even though their parents may not speak it (K. Dyebo, personal communication, 2009, for Mohawk in Kahnawake; M.A. Metallic, personal communication, 2011, for Mi'kmaq in Eskasoni).

A third possible model that does not in fact exist at present, but that as advocates of multilingual education we would strongly support, would be bilingual education with instruction in both the Indigenous and the colonial languages throughout the period of compulsory schooling (i.e., to age 16), with the balance between the languages depending on the language situation in the community. If the Indigenous language is strong, the presence of the colonial language alongside it from the beginning of schooling might not pose a threat and might in fact lead to balanced bilingualism and to more opportunities for post-secondary education for members of remote communities. If the Indigenous language is *not* strong, as in communities that have undergone some degree of language shift, immersion education in the

Indigenous language would be preferable, and, from our point of view, preferred, with the introduction of the colonial language as a language of instruction being deferred to later grades.

If it existed, this would be a true additive-bilingual model. Given that post-secondary education is available only in the colonial languages, there is clearly a good argument for promulgating this model as the most desirable one for *all* Indigenous children, just as many educators would promote some form of additive-bilingual education for all children regardless of ethnolinguistic origin (Cummins 2000; Lo Bianco 1987).

This model would be truly multilingual and additive. In addition to instruction in *both* the Indigenous and the local colonial language through the years of compulsory schooling, the other colonial language not prevalent in the region could be taught as a subject and *well* taught. While this is certainly possible in theory, in the current educational landscape in Canada this trilingual model does not exist for Indigenous students. Some Indigenous communities in Quebec offer the "other" colonial language as a subject through secondary school (for example, French, in the English-language secondary school at Kahnawake, close to Montreal; English, in the French-language secondary schools attended by Innu adolescents in eastern Quebec). We have known a few rare individuals who emerged as fluent trilinguals as a result, but they remain the exception.

Another way of becoming trilingual in an Indigenous language, French, and English, is to go to French-medium school in a community in which the Indigenous language and English are both community languages. This happens fairly frequently in situations where it is possible, for example in northern Quebec Inuit communities where parents have the choice of an English or a French school, as a technique to ensure that families will command all possible language resources among their members. However, it is impossible to know how widespread the practice is—exact figures are hard to come by—let alone what level of proficiency in all three languages would typically be reached by such students.

6.2.4 Two Examples from Quebec

6.2.4.1 Quebec, a Distinct Society Within Canada

It is no coincidence that the province of Quebec is the most likely place to look for examples of Indigenous multilinguals or of multilingual educational policies for Indigenous populations, although even there they are thin on the ground. Quebec has historically been a locus for the working out of Canadian desires and conflicts around language in the abstract, as well as more concrete language contact situations generally. The historical reasons that have led to this are many and complex (Oakes and Warren 2007). The outcome has been that the historical tension between a people descended from French colonists and a people descended from British colonists shifted from religious (Catholic vs. Protestant) to linguistic

(French vs. English) ground without losing any of the nervous energy that propelled it from the seventeenth into the twenty-first centuries. Until quite recently, government rhetoric still relied on the convenient fiction of "two founding peoples", ignoring the prior presence of hundreds of Indigenous peoples (and their hundreds of languages).

French-speakers and English-speakers therefore have for some time seen themselves as endlessly in competition for services in their own languages, in a way that speakers of other immigrant languages do not. Outside Quebec the numerically much less powerful French-speaking communities, though they exist all across Canada, do not generally compete with English-speakers as equals. In Quebec, however, the majority French-speaking population has succeeded in maintaining a privileged space for their language (protected by legislation from the late 1960s on) notably through the provincial Charter of the French Language enacted in 1977. In this province, the question of which official language will be adopted by non-Francophone communities—whether long-time white settler residents, more recent arrivals, or Indigenous peoples—is a matter of intense public concern and often fierce debate.

We now turn, therefore, to a consideration of two Indigenous communities, Unamen Shipu and Listuguj, which, although they are both in Quebec, have taken contrasting paths with respect to their choice of colonial language. In both communities a language belonging to the Algonquian family is spoken—Innu in Unamen Shipu, Mi'gmaq in Listuguj. But the two communities are geographically very far apart, and differ in many other ways. In Unamen Shipu, Innu is the main language of the community, and the challenge for educators is to ensure that children acquire a colonial language—here, French—well enough to have access to education outside the community if they wish it. In Listuguj, Mi'gmaq is in danger of being lost, and the usual language of the community and the school is a colonial language—here, English. The research projects we discuss here are with young children in one community, adults in the other. Yet in both places, use of new and creative approaches to language teaching has imbued speakers with confidence and has shown that fluency in the colonial language and a strong grasp of the traditional community language *can* coexist and be developed in tandem. We will first show how this is being done in Unamen Shipu, then move to a discussion of Listuguj. We are not ourselves Indigenous. In our capacities as academic researchers, we were invited to come into these communities to help with ongoing language education projects initiated by local school authorities and teachers.

6.2.4.2 When the Indigenous Language Is the Community Language: Innu Kindergarten in Unamen Shipu

Unamen Shipu, Quebec, with a population of about a thousand (AANDC 2011), is in the Quebec interior, north of the north-eastern coast of the St Lawrence River, 400 km north-east of Sept-Îles or 100 km north-west of Natashquan. The community is only accessible by plane, boat or snowmobile and is therefore quite isolated

compared to some other First Nations communities. The community is named after the river ("shipu" in Innu) LaRomaine, which merges into the St Lawrence River at this location. The Innu have traditionally lived across large parts of what is now the north coast of the St Lawrence River in Quebec and southern Labrador. Of the residents of Unamen Shipu, 99 %, from children through to elders, speak Innu. In the kindergarten of Unamen Shipu community, half the day is taught in Innu and the other half in French, by two different teachers. From grade one on, French is the language of instruction. In primary school, Innu is taught on a weekly basis as a subject for 2–3 periods of 45 min. However, in secondary school, the Innu language is not taught at all (see Model 2, above). Community educators have decided to prioritize French, the language of higher education and of employment opportunities in Quebec. While monolingualism in French is certainly not seen by the community as a goal of this policy, we maintain that over time there is a danger of community language shift.

At preschool level, the children's dominant language is Innu. An example of a lesson by the two kindergarten teachers from Tshishenniu Mishen preschool illustrates how overt instruction can use multimodal and multilingual resources to facilitate the expression of pluralistic learners' cultural imaginations. The teachers used talking circles during one classroom project to discuss the hunting of Canada geese. The Innu-speaking teacher also shared a hunting story during the talking circles. During these sharing activities, she taught new words in Innu related to this traditional activity. For example, she explained the origin of the word *tshinashkumitin* (I give you a goose). This word was translated by the French colonizers as 'thank you', because Innu, rather than baldly expressing a sentiment of gratitude, offered a goose as a symbol of their appreciation and satisfaction. In the second half of the same day, the French-speaking teacher encouraged the students to tell the same hunting story to her in French and taught them related French vocabulary. By sharing, students and teacher learned from each other.

The two teachers also helped the students turn their stories into a mural, posted in the corridor between the two kindergarten classrooms. Through this project, the children learnt communicative competencies (to express themselves in a group of peers and with elders, to use technologies to include images, etc.), spiritual knowledge (rituals related to hunting) and values (sharing material, space, tenacity). This visual representation helped the children to remember what they had learnt and to keep them motivated for the ongoing talking circles about the Canada geese. The mural and the talking circles in French and Innu were simultaneously learning and conceptualizing occasions and multimodal learning resources. They then planned to turn the mural into a book. By looking at the mural, students would have to remember collectively what they had learned about hunting Canada geese and tell the story. Teachers could write it down in both languages. The bilingual book would be an opportunity to build on the children's story-telling skills and help them make the transfer to pre-reading abilities. This also helped the children remember the stories learnt from their elders. Reapplying what they learned in each language in a new context is a way to sustain learning and to indigenize the curriculum.

6.2.4.3 When the Colonial Language Is the Community Language: Mi'gmaq Revitalization in Listuguj

In contrast to the isolated community of Unamen Shipu, Listuguj (with a band membership of 3,360, of whom 40 % do not live in Listuguj but in larger centres), is on a busy interprovincial highway at the eastern border of Quebec, just across a bridge from the regional centre of Campbellton, New Brunswick. In Listuguj, the proportion of speakers of Mi'gmaq is less than 20 %, nearly all older people, and declining yearly. Fuelled by concern at the high rate of Indigenous language attrition in the community, starting in 2006 the Listuguj Directorate of Education undertook an innovative language revitalization initiative. Language instructors have developed an approach to teaching Mi'gmaq to adult learners that is grounded in Mi'gmaq grammar, without reference to European theoretical-linguistic frameworks or language teaching methods.

In the Listuguj classrooms for adult learning of Mi'gmaq, all language teaching is based on carefully selected and structured sequences of colourful and attractive images, chosen to embody the grammatical structure of Mi'gmaq. Arrays of pictures are displayed in patterns to illustrate basic grammatical distinctions such as animate/inanimate noun classes and the very complex Algonquian system of verbal affixes to indicate manner and direction of motion, for which the instructors have found ingenious and simple visual representations (see Sarkar and Metallic 2009, for a lengthier discussion).

From the first class, instruction is related to the learners' family and community contexts. Their real kinship networks and daily activities in this small and tightly knit community form the basis of classroom interaction. The myriad ways in which the complex structure of Mi'gmaq differs from English are carefully, continuously explained in English, and also, as the learners improve their comprehension, in Mi'gmaq.

As the adult learners progress, they make conscious choices about what to focus on in terms of further language learning, and are themselves the most active participants in selecting contexts for language practice both inside and outside the classroom. The instructors encourage them to be pro-active learners and to draw on all the resources available to them (family, elders, friends). Learners recognize that they will be able to use Mi'gmaq in some community contexts, but, given the language use patterns in this community, not in all. For example, one learner decided as her main challenge of one term (about 40 h spread over 12 weeks) to focus on the language of ritual greetings and prayers, because her job with the Listuguj government required her to travel to formal meetings and greet elders at other communities. With the help of the instructors, she devised a speech entirely in Mi'gmaq, all of which she had herself worked out lexically and grammatically. She was able to use this language in a way that was very meaningful and emotionally charged, not just to her, but also to her community and to the others she visited. The elders she had occasion to address were extremely moved that a young woman in her 30s, not previously a speaker, had been able to make the journey back to

re-acquisition of her ancestral language in this linguistically complex, culturally highly significant context of use; they saw this as a source of new hope for their own communities.

6.3 New Population Movement, New Technologies, a New Demographics for Indigenous Peoples

6.3.1 Urban Indigeneity and Language

Taking a wider and more issues-based perspective, we now move away from the two small, non-urban Indigenous communities where we have worked with language educators over the past few years. Indigenous Canadians themselves are in fact moving to the big cities in increasing numbers. Their original home may be in a remote and isolated northern community like Unamen Shipu, one where the ancestral language is strong and the connection to living on the land still an everyday reality. Or they may be from a semi-suburban community like Listuguj where the language is slipping away and most people have adopted a lifestyle not appreciably different from that of their non-Indigenous neighbours in adjoining towns. Census data from 2001 on indicate that more than half of Indigenous Canadians live in urban areas, and this figure is increasing (Tomiak and Patrick 2010).

The new reality of "Urban Indigeneity" inevitably has an impact on language learning and retention, as yet understudied (Patrick and her colleagues in Ottawa, working with urban Inuit in the nation's capital, are a notable exception). While opportunities to learn the language from elders living on the land are fewer, a critical mass of Indigenous language learners in a given location has the potential to mobilize urban resources—for example, in support of community-based second language classes in cities such as Toronto (J. Koostachin, personal communication, October 2010)—where members of several different communities who share the same ancestral language may come together. Proximity to better schools and services may enable growing networks of language learners to team up with educators to develop innovative approaches to Indigenous language revitalization. These, in turn, have the potential to spread back to the land base and to learners there.

6.3.2 Social [and Linguistic] Networking

The use of digital tools to aid in language teaching and learning is one example of technological innovation being used in the service of Indigenous language revitalization. We have documented the development of a Facebook site for learning

Mi'gmaq, initiated by a teacher in Listuguj, M.A. Metallic, that attracted hundreds of members in just a few months and that was an active locus for language learning over a large geographical area even though most of the members had never physically met (Sarkar and Metallic 2009). Many such sites can be in operation for shorter or longer periods of time, uniting learners on a pragmatic basis in fluid and changing configurations; younger learners more at ease with the technology can and do team up with older fluent speakers to create and manage digital language learning resources.

The movement to put new technologies to work in the service of Indigenous language revitalization is of course not confined to Canada, but is burgeoning worldwide. The February 2012 annual meeting of the American Association of the Advancement of Science featured a session on "Endangered and Minority Languages Crossing the Digital Divide" that, among other things, asked the question "What new possibilities are gained through social networking, video streaming, twitter, software interfaces, smart phones, machine translation, and digital talking dictionaries?" These are just a few examples of current technology; more and more "new possibilities" will be added to this list every year. Mainstream media are making a wider public aware of endangered languages and ways in which technology can help them (for example, Amos 2012).

6.3.3 This Population Is Not Aging

Finally, it is important to point out the simple demographic fact that, in contrast to the rest of the population of Canada, statistics for the First Nations, Inuit and Métis show that this population is not only growing (Saul 2008) but growing rapidly. Canadian Indigenous populations are youthful populations, with a much younger average age than any other ethnically defined group in Canada because of a high birth rate. In the context of a mainstream population which is aging at an alarming rate, threatening to put an intolerable burden on health and social services before many more decades have passed, the existence of a more youthful demographic among Indigenous peoples is not only cause for cheer, it may eventually be all that can save the idea of Canada as an expansive and generous place in which to live the good life—meaning, among other things, one with free universal health care and a social welfare buffer adequate to the needs of the less fortunate.

Statistics show how few Indigenous youth have until now managed to successfully navigate an educational system which they have such good historical reasons to dislike and in which the odds are so heavily stacked against them (Salée et al. 2006. These statistics are appalling. However, public awareness of Canada's need for *all* her citizens to be given access to rich educational resources is growing. For example, the groundbreaking CBC documentary *8th Fire* (aired January-February 2012) showed both failures and successes in the long saga of Indigenous experience of white settler education, and pointed out—in the words of an ex-Prime-Minister of Canada, Paul Martin, featured on the show—that "We can't

afford to waste a single talent" (CBC 2012). Also featured on the show were several heartening educational success stories, for example from First Nations University in Regina, Saskatchewan (interested readers can watch the documentary episodes themselves through the "TV" link on the site). Up-to-date production values and a completely contemporary, media-savvy style of informal presentation did much to make the message easy to understand. These are signs that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians may be ready to put their differences behind them and start working together on ways forward.

6.4 Conclusion

At present the language education of children of Indigenous heritage in Canada is not covered by any coherent policy across the whole country. Not just one, but a network of many new policies is needed. These policies would, first, honour the linguistic traditions of the ancestors. Second, they would respect the possible wishes of parents and families to preserve those traditions in healthy multilingual communities. Finally, they would support children's potential to grow up as multiply-identified individuals. Young Indigenous Canadians could become adults in whose lives the ability to speak their Indigenous language (as well as one or both of Canada's colonizing languages) might figure as an important part of their identity as Indigenous Canadians. The contribution that a wealth of such individuals would add to the much-vaunted Canadian cultural mosaic (Day 2000) is not yet considered by "the mainstream" as something that might enrich all Canadians and make Canada stand out in the world with respect to its treatment of Indigenous people and issues.

Many Canadian Indigenous children live in communities where the ancestral language is still strong. These communities are usually fairly remote and isolated, far away from the urban centres those children will have to move to if they pursue post-secondary education. If these young people stay home and keep their language and culture intact, the price is all too likely to be continued economic marginalization. Fewer and fewer young people are willing to pay that price, as census figures on population movement, urbanization and mother-tongue shift show. If they move away to pursue better educational and employment opportunities, they put distance between themselves and their Indigenous languages that can result in permanent language shift in one or two generations.

All this could change if multilingualism in Indigenous and colonizing (or for that matter other) languages were recognized as an asset, a personal and societal gain with no unavoidable concomitant loss when parents, communities and educators are supported by progressive policies. The frequent cases where the Indigenous language is no longer the community language can potentially be turned around through appropriate second language programs and pedagogy, in a "Reversing Language Shift" model of the kind theorized and amply documented by Fishman (2001). Indigenous mother-tongue or immersion education throughout the period of

compulsory schooling, combined with effective programming for adult learners, need not be seen as an unattainable utopian dream. It has been achieved elsewhere—the case of Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand is an outstanding example (Ratima and May 2011). In this regard, language educators have a special responsibility to be activists, to attempt to influence policy, and to mobilize the public in the cause of school- and society-based reform.

We have, therefore, endeavoured to show how with a modicum of collective effort and societal goodwill, the basis for recognition of the worth of a multilingualism that includes Indigenous languages is at least beginning to be laid in Canada, in a community here, a community there. Small-scale projects similar to the ones we describe here are being undertaken all across Canada and in many other countries. What is principally needed is a more sensitive ear on the part of majority-language speakers everywhere, especially monolingual ones, to the multilingual voices of speakers of Indigenous languages. Their message comes down from the distant pre-colonial past, but the voices are contemporary. They speak to our present and to our future.

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